

#### GROWTH OF GERMAN INFLUENCE

including the well-known mullah Seyyid Abol Qasim Kashani and the deputy Habibullah Nobakht.

Informed of this betrayal Mayr hurriedly left Isfahan and reappeared in Teheran. There, by a courier from Ankara, he received information that his secret service chiefs had decided to send him the requested wireless operators. The message contained details as to the time and place of their parachuting into Iran.

Following these arrangements, six German agents were parachuted near the salt lake northeast of Qum on March 30, 1943. They were amply equipped in money and weapons. Upon reaching Teheran they informed Mayr that their orders provided for the establishment of wireless liaison with Berlin and for the sabotage of the Allied war effort.

The German secret service, promptly informed of the success of the first mission, decided to send another to southern Iran. The second mission, composed of three Germans and one Iranian, was parachuted near Shiraz on July 15, 1943. There they joined Schulze.

Despite some earlier reverses at Isfahan, Mayr managed to preserve the Melliyun organization relatively intact. Melliyun's task now consisted in influencing the coming elections to the Fourteenth Majlis with a view to creating an anti-Allies bloc of deputies. This

bloc would have to prevent Iran's entry into the war on the side of the Allies and to conduct a general anti-Allies policy.

The main objective of Mayr's fifth column was, however, to hinder the flow of supplies to Russia. "Our aim," he telegraphed Berlin in August, 1943, "would thus be the creation of an independent and neighboring war zone with the object of interrupting supplies and keeping the occupying troops busy." <sup>14</sup>

By the middle of August, 1943, these plans were well under way. The Melliyun, which included responsible railway officials, was busy sabotaging the Transiranian line. Accidents multiplied, security in the provinces deteriorated rapidly, and election maneuvers were at their height in the capital.

Meanwhile the British intelligence organs (the Counter-intelligence Corps Iran) were gradually gathering dues to the whole

14 Quoted from the *Tehran Daily News*, March 16, 1945, which, following the British Embassy's release, published the story of the fifth column.